2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

Chapter 14

FIRST WALKS ABROAD

THE very day after our arrival we went out for a stroll to take stock of our immediate surroundings. Along the Dála, the little stream which ran in front of our house, there is a tiny foot-path, just wide enough for one. On our right was the channel in its carefully made bed with a stone revetting wall above it holding up the field above; on our left a fine hedge of quick-thorn to keep passing beasts from jumping into the field 4 or 5 feet below. We could hear a merry sound of drums and pipes coming from somewhere downhill, and asked what was on. It seemed that just before we arrived the first barley-cutting had been celebrated with various ceremonies, which we could only hope to see in detail next year, and some of the jollification was still being kept up. Qudrat Ullah was with us, and a "levy." I must explain the levies. In most villages Government chooses, no doubt on the Mir's advice, one or two of the most respected peasant-farmers who are not head-men or officials of the Mir himself, and pays them a small (very small) monthly wage so that they may be ready to do any little Government jobs that are wanted. There are three in Aliábád, which is relatively a large place with about two hundred scattered houses, and the Political Agent had kindly instructed them that one of their jobs was to be useful to us. I may as well at once introduce the two first: Kalbi is a fine upstanding man, rather darker in colour than the average; and Hurmat, a younger, very cheery fellow with dashing mous-taches. They are both intelligent and extremely friendly and eager to help. We didn't see why they should waste time on us for nothing, so David at once agreed with them that he

624 would pay them a small retaining fee if they would take it in
● 124 turns to be "on duty" with him in their spare time. They would obviously be useful informants.

487 We had to walk along in single file. There is no "road" in
312 Hunza where two people can walk abreast, or along which you can ride, except the "Great North Road" running through from Kashmir to Kashgar, and even it is never more than 4 to 6 feet wide. The other tracks run mostly beside small water-channels to enable people to get from one sluice to another to juggle the water now off, now on. Even when you have a neat little track fairly horizontal (there are only three of these possible for ordinary walking) it is broken every few yards by a sluice which you must jump or step over carefully so as not to interfere with the water arrangements or, alternatively, break your leg. The sluices are the simplest things imaginable—just a gap in the side wall of the channel which can be closed with a couple of convenient, slab-like stones and plastered up with mud from the watercourse. Occasionally there is a little wooden shutter which can be raised or lowered in wooden slots at the side.

As we went along David asked the names of the various kinds of water-channels, fields, etc., that we saw (the *names* he already knew, but not at first hand which kind was which), and presently we had a train of bright-eyed boys in the fields on each side, full of amusement at this new game. One would cry: "This stone is a flint; this is a stink-stone," whereupon he would crack it and give it to us to notice the faint smell of sulphur it gave out. Another would run up: "Here's a poppy and a poppy-head"—so we were not going to lack for willing teachers.

After a little we turned down a narrow "lane," less like an English lane than anything else on earth. It plunged downhill pretty steeply, sometimes just a rocky slope, sometimes just one boulder below another making a very crude flight of steps varying from 18 inches to 3 feet or so. Beside the "path" ran the inevitable water-gutter in which you could walk, as it happened at the moment to be dry.

417 On each side, a bare 3 feet apart, were the usual walls of
333

FIRST WALKS ABROAD

There were two dear little girls, Shamáli and 524
Banu, about six and four, who played with me and let me 177
tickle them with straws and play "One little pig went to market . . ." with their dusty little toes. This game proved such a success that I roughly translated it into "One little sheep went to drink. . . ." They would never have seen a pig, and if they had they *ought* to think it unclean, so I thought a lamb was safer. My first version gave one little lamb bread to eat, "bread" being a general word for "food." This caused great laughter: "Lambs wouldn't like bread, Mother dear." "Well, what do you think they'd like best?" "Oh, grass or leaves." "One little lamb had grass to eat and one little lamb had none." Thus amended, my little rhyme was approved, and other youngsters turned up to play "little lambs" till the game grew so popular that whenever I sat down on anyone's threshing-floor baby feet would be stretched out towards me: "One little lamb, Mother . . ." till I got quite tired of ". . . baa, baa, baa, all the way home," but it never palled on them. Centuries hence, when we shall have long been sleeping in the Garden of Rest at Golders Green, some anthropologist will come along and wonder what process of "diffusion" took "one little pig" to Hunza, or whether Hunza spontaneously generated the jingle for itself.

My pencil and little notebook were a great source of amuse- 124
ment, and the youngsters would crowd round: "Have you put 476
my name in? I'm Shamúli." "So you are; but whose Shamúli are you? I've got two Shamúlis already. Who's your Daddy? How many brothers have you got; how many sisters, are they bigger or smaller, what are *their* names? And which house is yours?" Thus gradually I got to know most of our immediate neighbours, but it was no easy matter to sort the families out, for groups would gather on each other's threshing-floors, and anyone whose own immediate work was done would join in to help the workers. I finally gave numbers of my own to all the nearest houses, and tried bit by bit to plot out the various relationships.

Meantime the threshing went steadily on, and I noticed that 293
the driver carried always a flat bowl shoulder high in her left 237
hand. "Now what's that for?" asked I. "Why, that's the dung-

2: Lorimer J-3 (1932-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

wheat—the usual "Ha! Ha! Ha!" encouraging them and the usual dung-dish unostentatiously circulating behind. It was an interesting, very typical scene, and not a hundred yards below our house. I sent a message up to David (there is always a small candidate to act proudly as messenger) to tell him that he might care to bring his camera. In a few minutes he was picking his way cautiously down the breakneck track while a great cheer of welcome rang from the little crowd. They had all been genuinely concerned about his illness, and were delighted to see that he was better and able to come down and watch things himself. It was his first visit to one of the field working parties. He sat on a low wall in a tiny speck of shade, made friendly chat all round, and was a great social success.

While I pottered each morning in the fields, enjoying myself among the people, he was usually hard at work indoors with Qudrat Ullah, taking notes of how the irrigation is managed and the system on which the water is distributed by clans and families, and working out genealogical trees. This latter is a weary affair but most useful, for it gives you insight into all their marriage alliances, how many children each family has, how many boys and how many girls, who is allowed to marry whom, and what the relationship terms are, both in the vocative between the various members of a family group, and in the third person when others are talking of them—a highly complicated but most instructive subject. An elder brother will address the younger by one method, while the younger will use a more respectful term towards the elder; all the younger boys of a family will use to their *eldest* sister the same respectful form of address as to their eldest brother, though to the uninitiated it would seem to imply that she was a male. A man addresses his wife's father and mother in precisely the same terms and with the same respect as his own. A child's "uncle" is a mother's brother only; the father's brother is "Little Father" or "Big Father" according as the speaker's own father (about whom there is no ambiguity) is older or younger than the uncle concerned. The children of brothers who all share the one home speak of each other as brother and sister, unless there is need to be more explicit, in which case they will

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

Chapter 25

LEARNING AN UNKNOWN LANGUAGE

124 BEFORE we quit Hunza for our trip to Yasin, I may perhaps interpolate—for language lovers only—a few notes on the more technical side of our work.

People at home, whose idea of learning a new language—if they want to do anything so eccentric and unusual—is to buy grammar and dictionary, instal a set of Linguaphone records, attend classes, or hire a teacher, often ask how you can tackle the problem of learning an unwritten language where such aids do not exist and whose speakers are what the Germans call *analphabetisch*. It may be of interest to them to know how DL has usually set about it, though other pioneer language workers have doubtless evolved other methods.

You first select a few intelligent men who speak their language well and clearly, and work with them until you light on the one best suited to your purpose. You then annex him to the household at a fixed, generous salary, so that he will always be available when wanted, whether at home or on tour. I may mention incidentally that in our life the language hobby involved a considerable regular outlay in wages, pony hire, travelling expenses, etc., for such language retainers, of whom we often had two, three, or four in tow at once, and such a post with us was much coveted.

As long as he was an official, David had, of course, to fit this private amusement of his into the nooks and crannies left by his work, which naturally took unquestioned precedence, and was often so exacting as to leave no time at all save for meals and a minimum of essential exercise, so that these costly informants might be unused for days or weeks.

Having picked a suitable and congenial man—there is no

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920–4; 1934–5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

use trying to work if it can be avoided with a person you dislike—the game begins. In our regions it was usually possible to find a man with some smattering of Hindustani, Persian, or Pashtu, which helped to speed up the preliminary stages. You get him in, squat him on the floor, and by means of your medium language get hold of a few everyday words: 124 •

father	mother	grandchild	good	bad
grass	tree	wheat	arm	leg, etc.

then the primary colours: *black*, *white*, *red*; the numerals, pronouns, and a few simple time-expressions.

Oddly, many non-European languages have only one word for *blue* and *green*, but you take refuge in *blue as the sky*, "*blue*" *as grass*. Again, oddly as it seems to us, many have ambiguous time-expressions that look indifferently before and after (like the French *tout à l'heure*) so that *yesterday* is the same as *to-morrow*, i.e. one day before or after to-day.

The next most urgent item is, of course, the verb. You choose the seemingly simplest verbal idea "to have" but immediately strike a snag. *I have a stick* seems straightforward enough to an English mind, but you extract only "the stick is with me," "the stick is beside me," "the stick is in my hand"; there is, in fact, no verb "to have." So you take *to go* and try to get the forms of the present tense: *I go*, *thou goest*. . . . Bearing in mind that your man has no idea of grammar, you will not be surprised or daunted by arriving at something of this sort: 124 193

I'm off	we're making a move
thou goest	you are clearing out
he's starting	they flee

You're an old hand and you guess at once that the verb is not bedevilled, but that you have got a clue to six verbs instead of one and to the future as well as to the present tense. Pursuing the past tense of a verb which lets its action be graphically illustrated you may extract something like:

Yesterday I smote	We had beaten
thou hast hit *or* banged	you thrashed
he struck	they whacked *or* belaboured

again with a merry assortment of different roots and a confusion of various shades of past-ness. All these various things you ultimately succeed in pigeon-holing.

According to the intelligence of your man—and many of these untutored folk are quite as intelligent as the average headmaster or Oxford don—and the amount of time you have to spare and the intricacy of the language (Burushaski being at least ten times as difficult as Shina or Khowar) your rate of progress will vary. In any case, you will find that, however bright and willing your informant, he is wholly unused to sustained concentration, and must immediately be released at the first sign of weariness or boredom. Also that you must spend many hours working through and sorting your notes and tabulating your results before the next interview, if this is to be profitable.

It was DL's practice to escape at the first possible moment from the thraldom of the intermediate language. First because translation from another tongue is always liable to distort and colour the speaker's own idiom, and secondly because both your and your informant's knowledge (especially his) of the second language is imperfect and often inaccurate, and the amount you actually have in common very limited. It is therefore at best an untrustworthy crutch.

You then bid him think over some short narrative—a fairy tale, an anecdote of real life (a wedding, a funeral, or a raid)—and be prepared to tell it to you very slowly. It is not the affair of a day to train him to speak at a pace you can carefully record, and at first if he has outstripped you and is asked to "say that again" he will repeat himself in totally different words till your text is an agglomeration of bewildering anacoluths.

Having got a first short text on to paper phonetically—without being at all clear of its meaning or the right division of words—and having deciphered of it what you can, you read it aloud to him next day, making corrections as required, and if *he* can understand it, you have made your first step forward. The more unsophisticated he is, the more enchanted he will be to hear his own words again verbatim, and you are half way to making a philologist of him; you have, at any rate, enlisted

2; Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

an interested collaborator. But you yourself have not got one word in ten, perhaps not one in fifty. You then work painstakingly through the text, getting a rough translation by means of the medium language, asking plural forms and other verbal tenses and acquiring in the process a mass of extra material in your notes. 126

As the days go on, your man becomes more and more helpful, he gets to know something of your grammatical wants and will now volunteer the plural forms, or stop his tale to interpolate: "he went, he goes, he will go, he has gone," or the like; or he will offer an equivalent expression, no longer as an anacoluthon, or digress to tell of some native custom, the details of some cooking process or some current superstition.

It is no easy task to keep your notes in such form as to be readily available for reference; it is still less easy to keep at command—in your head and on your tongue—all that you have already learned. Here, of course, the whole-time philologist has untold advantage over the busy man who can only snatch odd moments before or after a hard day's work, and sometimes after long blank intervals, for the pursuit of this most exacting of hobbies.

I never lost my admiration of the determination with which DL would give all his leisure to these exhausting séances. It might be half an hour before breakfast; it might be a pause between the reception of two official visitors; it might be a few minutes' interval while an important paper was being fetched from the office files, or a draft despatch typed for signature. Even on tour, when each day meant a mountain march of eighteen to twenty-five miles, in heat or cold, in rain or sun, over difficult and often dangerous country, plunging through banked-up sands by the river-bed, skirting precipitous cliffs along a rock-cut track eked out by the frailest of wooden bridges, or across the dreaded face of a stone shoot where the perpetual trickling of surface pebbles was an ominous reminder that any moment loose boulders might bombard the treacherous track; when each arrival at the rest-house of the day was the signal for visits of courtesy by some local headman or royalty, for the reception of petitioners and the sympathetic 124 •

8: Lorimer T-3 (1920–4; 1934–5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

124 hearing of complaints; no sooner had these matters and a cup of tea been disposed of, than out came pen, paper, and writing-board and one informant or another was on the floor beside the Sahib's chair. If we were passing through a district whose speech might be some variant of the "classical" Shina of Gilgit, some local man would be fetched in to throw light on the local patois and its divergence from what it was convenient to take as the norm. These extra séances by the road yielded, for instance, seven different methods—all instructive and all mutually illuminating—of conjugating the transitive verb in Shina.

Whether the locality had fresh local matter to offer or not, there was always some language-informant in our train, and in defiance of fatigue or headache, work could be and was pursued.

As knowledge accumulated, the word for word translation of texts was no longer necessary, and difficult passages were explained and commented on in the language itself, so that the last shred of possible misunderstanding and obscurity arising from the intermediate language was eliminated.

The problem constantly arose at every stage, whether with limited time at your disposal and limited endurance at the informant's, it was better to linger over a seemingly insoluble riddle or to pass on. DL found that in practice, though it went against all military principle to leave a fortress untaken in your rear, this sometimes fell of itself, if you ignored it and continued your campaign. In other words, that a tangle of to-day, which seemed only to grow worse as you wrangled with it, might unravel itself by some new turn of phrase acquired to-morrow, or a week hence—or a year.

Lest all this sound too easy, let me make it more vivid by an analogy. Suppose yourself shipwrecked on the coast of France, where the community are illiterate fishermen and peasants, and there are neither books nor schoolmasters. You get down to acquiring spoken French. There may be a couple of sailors among the foreshore folk who have, like yourself, a limited knowledge of Dutch. You set to work:

u(n)	deu(x)	troi(s)	quatre	
cinq	six	se(p)t	huit	neuf

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

124

Having got the simple numerals you proceed:

u	nenfant	une	femme
deu	zenfants	deu	femmes
troi	zenfants	troi	femmes
quat	trenfants	quatre	femmes
cin	kenfants	cin	femmes
sé	tenfants	sé	femmes
hui	tenfants	hui	femmes
neu	venfants	neu	femmes

It will take a little time to work out the true initials of the nouns and the finals of the numerals, to discover the secret of the vowel—the *h* mute you will never reach for it is an orthographic fiction—and to formulate the rules of liaison.

You will not at once discover when the adjective precedes and when it follows its noun, nor which inanimate objects will be considered masculine and which feminine—why, in fact, *un couteau* but *une fourchette*, *un sofa* but *une chaise*—what principles govern the use of *du* and *de*, *beaucoup de* but *bien des*.

And when you turn to verbs it will take perseverance to disentangle the four "regular" conjugations and the handsome varieties of the "irregular." The uses of *me* and *moi* may hold you up a bit, and the idiomatic vagaries of *en*, *y* and *que*. By the time you have entirely reduced to order, say, the verb *s'en aller* and can account to your own satisfaction for n'est-ce pas? jusqu'a ce qu'il ne vienne, a moins qu'il ne soit, si j'etais que de vous, vas-y, ne voilà-t-il pas? and have recorded verbatim all the folk-lore, local history, and gossip that you can track down, your hair may well be turning somewhat grey. Yet French is a language closely allied to our own, of familiar structure, full of cognate roots and basing on Latin which we know; the Frenchman's customs and modes of thought are akin to ours; his religion and morals are variants of our own. Try Burushaski.

I am conscious that in writing of all we heard and said I may have seemed to imply—though I trust not with the unblushing disingenuousness of some travel-writers—that conversation always flowed smoothly and easily. This was not wholly the case. The worst brick I heaved was when I saw a

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

124 relatively strange woman clearing up after a day's work and breezily accosted her: "*Jú nø*, sister, I see you are sweeping up the threshing floor with your little bastard." In extenuation I may remark that the words for "broom" and "bastard" differ only in ending in *s* and *sh* respectively, and that the *s*-one turns its *s* into *sh* in the plural. Any offence that might have been given was quenched in the delighted laughter of the people with me, but I was afraid to talk of brooms, whether singular or plural, for many a day.

Even at the end of fifteen months of strenuous practice in talking (and several years of preceding hard work), neither of us had acquired the skill or fluency in speaking that would have rewarded the same effort and goodwill expended on a language like Persian, German, or Shina. The most confirmed language-smatterer could not truthfully say that Burushaski is an easy language to "pick up." It may amuse the reader to know something of the snags that it holds for the unwary—and the wary, too.

193 Burushaski rejoices in four noun categories, roughly corresponding to "genders" in Greek or Latin, but not, as will be seen, based on sex-distinction. If, however, we think of the gender eccentricities of French and German we may indeed question whether grammatical gender in the European languages is really sex-linked as our terminology implies. Professor Meinhoff has other theories about its origin.

Be that as it may, Burushaski divides its nouns into names denoting human male and female—which is straightforward enough—but treats the names of all non-human, living animals as belonging to Class 3, cows and bulls, cocks and hens, mares and stallions alike, while including in the same class the names of a large number of inanimate concrete objects. Class 4 comprises the names of all abstract things—heat and cold, kindness and dreams—of all inanimate objects of indefinite shape and form (such as flour, water, cloud, and sand) besides a distressing number which might seem to belong equally well to Class 3 but just don't.

Amusing facts are that the same word in Class 3 denotes an *apple*, but in Class 4 an *apple tree*; in 3 the belly of a living

DIGRESSION TO YASIN

There was no advantage in my also trying to slog at Werchikwar as we were not staying long enough to turn it to account. So we had decided beforehand that I could best employ working hours in trying to work out the major differences between Hunza and Nagir Burushaski which are perhaps too nearly identical to be styled separate dialects, but yet naturally show some distinctive variations. To this end we had borrowed from the Mir of Nagir a morganatic brother-in-law of some education, Ali Ausat by name, a young man about the same age as Qudrat Ullah, and annexed him—at a salary, of course.

The two had travelled together in our train since Aliábád with instructions to talk together about everything under heaven, and make notes of all the points, however trifling, in which their speech differed. While DL toiled away with Muslim in one room of the spacious rest-house, I set up my writing table in another, and got the two young men in to help me to set on record whatever observations they had made. Each day I suggested one set of things for them to work out together before the morrow—household utensils and field implements, irrigation terms, the vocabulary of relationship, etc., etc., and we then ran through their comparative lists with ample digressions whenever any point of interest challenged attention. It proved a most amusing game, and their good-humoured wrangles over which of two forms of expression was the more classical Burushaski were a constant amusement to all three of us. I hope it will prove that we covered most of the vital points; it is for DL to work out the material in due course.

Superficially the main items that leaped to the eye (or ear) were: first, that the Nagir vocabulary has been far more deeply interpenetrated—or corrupted—by Shina than Hunza Burushaski, but that on the other hand Nagir has been more conservative in preserving full verbal forms and un-telescoped vowel sounds. Nagir preferring, as it were, "I shall" to "I'll," "he does not" to "he doesn't," "we will not" to "we won't," and the like. The differences, however, between the Hunza and Nagir speech proved (as we already knew) to be trifling compared with those between Hunza Burushaski and

7:Tobe C, T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

after the usual greetings, he asked how Cec was doing. 122

"He seems to be quite a bit better today!"

"I'm awfully sorry he had to leave last night," said the Mir.

I didn't think he'd even noticed it—but he had.

"The doctor is up visiting him now," I told him. "He said he would join us in a few minutes."

"What does he usually have for breakfast?" the Mir asked me.

"Oatmeal, poached or soft boiled eggs, toast, jam and coffee would be wonderful if they are available."

"Not only is it available," said the Mir, "it is ready, for that is part of the breakfast we usually prepare for our guests. It will be taken up to him immediately."

A signal and a few words in Burushaski and Cecil's breakfast was well on its way up.

So we had breakfast in the dining room and chatted 124 and I sought to make every moment count by asking questions that were vital to me . . . that is, questions about Hunza.

I am quite sure that the Rani understood most of [191] the things that we talked about. She could not have been shamming as she looked both interested and charming while the conversation went on.

"I have arranged for an interpreter to accompany 124 you on your trips and you can go wherever you like, 115 providing you can get through and the roads are open," 191 the Mir told us.

Shortly after, Sultan Ali appeared. He was the schoolmaster and also taught the Mir's children at home. He was to be our interpreter and guide. He was a slender, handsome young man. I'd judge his age as being in the early twenties. His command of English was very good. But I don't think his English was up to the standard spoken by the Mir, who spoke so fluently

•124
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191 that one would never believe that it was only a secondary language to him.

231
115 "You know," I said to the Mir, "one of the things that I wanted to see when I came to Hunza was a yak. I understand from my readings that yaks are used in this part of the country and I have been looking everywhere as I walked along the road to Baltit, but I have as yet seen no sign of a yak!"

"That is not hard to explain," the Mir said. "The yaks are further up in the mountains. They cannot stand the heat and we keep them in the higher altitudes where they can be comfortable. If they are brought to the lower altitudes, they suffer. They like to be up around 11,000 feet or higher."

"Well, then how can I get up to see them?" I asked. "I don't mind if I have to walk for a day or two, but see them I must!"

"I'll do better than that," said the Mir. "I will phone and have two yaks brought down as quickly as possible. They will have to come from Passu which is about 38 miles from here. I will have action taken at once and see that the yaks are provided."

115
124 (Does that not indicate to you the kind of man and host was the Mir of Hunza?)

I then took my leave of the Mir and the Rani and went out with Sultan Ali and Jahangir to look, see, pry and ask questions.

344
644 Our first jaunt was a good stiff climb to the old palace located about two miles from the Mir's new palace. As the crow would fly I'm sure it would not have been more than ¾ of a mile. But in order to get up there one has to wend and weave and climb slowly.

I was now becoming quite accustomed to the altitude. Kerimabad is up about 8500 feet and I am sure

7:Tobe C, T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

that the old palace is up at least another 500 or 600 feet. It was perched precariously on a huge outcropping of rock that jutted straight up into the air and the entire surface of the pinnacle was used for the building. There was no superfluous area surrounding it.

I had a long list of questions prepared and I knew even before I started that Sultan Ali could not give me all the answers because many of the questions were strictly horticultural—others dealt with dietary principles. I wanted to talk to farmers and individual people and housewives on both of these subjects.

I asked if he could arrange to take me to a group of farmers or even an individual farmer . . . that is, farmers who were capable and efficient—the better, the more intelligent and prosperous ones . . . so that I might delve into their ways and means of field husbandry.

He nodded, "This will be done. When would you like to talk to them?"

"Tomorrow morning, if it can be done," I replied.

"That's fine. I will arrange it!"

Wherever it was possible, I wanted to get my information direct from the people concerned. There is actually only one class of people in Hunza and one occupation, which is farming. I only know of one shop in the area and it sells mostly goods that have been brought in by the Chinese caravans that have passed through. I don't doubt also that there were some goods in this same shop that came into Hunza via Rawalpindi and Gilgit.

However, it was plain and clear that 900 of the citizens of Hunza out of 1000 made their living by means of farming. Therefore, as I had come to Hunza primarily to study the farming and horticultural methods of the people, the preparation of the foods they ate,

121 and of course the kinds and varieties of foods that were used, I attached great importance to this phase of my trip and I was definitely determined that, come what might, this information I would have thoroughly and in detail.

124 No doubt it would have been an advantage had I been able to speak either Urdu, or better still Burushaski, so that I could frame my questions as I saw fit and have answers that would be direct and would not require translation. However, that was not possible. Still, I had no reason to believe that my interpreter would not be a forthright individual who would give me the answers that were relayed to him clearly and to the point.

Mind you, I was seeking no miracle or world panacea. I wanted to find out the simple truth!

Further, I wanted to walk from farm to farm . . . that is, just selecting one at random here and there. I wanted to view the farmer's activities, study his soil and examine it, ask a few questions and thus, I could gather the information that I wanted and which was so vital to me.

344 644 The old palace proved to be in a good state of preservation. I wondered, because of its good condition, why someone didn't live there. Many of the rooms were still furnished. There were even rugs and tapestries placed and hung in their original positions.

[126] When we climbed to the top of the castle—that is, to the roof where I snapped many photos—it seemed mighty high and overlooked everything around us. But [133] in the distance were mountains that were well over 20,000 feet—and that is no exaggeration, but more likely an understatement.

There was a railing around this upper balcony and from this balcony you could walk into other chambers.

7:Tobe C, T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

CHAPTER 29

Hunzan Crafts and Skills

THE NEXT MORNING Jahangir came to our quarters just as I was ready to leave for breakfast. Cec again remained in bed on the doctor's advice.

The Mir was waiting for us in his bright, pleasant sun room when we entered and with him was another handsome, beaming man whom he introduced as his brother, Ayesh, who had just returned from a trip up country.

It is customary for the Mir's oldest brother to remain unmarried and act as an advisor, assistant, secretary or whatever else this position might be termed. He also acted as the Mir's emissary and was the engineer of the electric light outfit in operation at the palace.

We were then ushered into the dining room for breakfast. The Mir, Ayesh and the Rani seated themselves just to keep us company and of course add delight and conversation while we breakfasted.

•124 [788] "You understand," he said, "that the reason I do not have breakfast with you is due entirely to the fact that I must rise at 3:30 every morning to perform my religious duties . . . and 'tis then I have my morning meal."

"Thank you most sincerely for your explanation. It is most important to me so I may better understand the ways of your people and yourself."

Then the Mir went on, "I have received word that two yaks are being brought down from Passu and should arrive at Altit some time during the night and will be there tomorrow morning."

Then I said to the Mir, "Would it be all right if I walked to Altit and rode one of the yaks back here to your palace?"

"That's exactly what I had in mind for you," said the Mir.

"Well, seeing there are two yaks coming down, as you mentioned, and my friend Cec is confined to his quarters by the doctor, I'll take Jahangir along and he'll ride the other yak back."

"Fine, fine!" said the Mir.

124 115 644 Then the conversation continued and the Mir said, "I have another brother and I certainly hope you will have an opportunity to meet him. He is serving in the Pakistan army—as a captain. I expect him back within the next 3 or 4 days and you will enjoy meeting him, I know. He is a most likable and interesting man. I hope he gets here before you decide to leave."

"I'd be very happy to meet him and I, too, hope he arrives before we depart."

[302] "We call him Salat," he said. "That means moustache in our language. He has one of those handlebar moustaches and he's a big man—bigger than either Ayesh or I. His proper name is Capt. Jamshed Khan."

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Ayesh was a most jovial character. He had the most pleasant smiling happy countenance of any man I've ever met. He was always either laughing or smiling and every time I looked at him I had to smile as well. He was a handsome man but in contrast to the Mir, who had a good head of dark hair, Ayesh was balding, the same as I.

It was most pleasant to see the splendid cordial relationship that existed between him and the Mir's entire family.

"How are you coming along with your quest for information?" asked the Mir.

"Exceptionally well, sir," I replied. "But there are also many questions that only you can answer and I'm hoping that you can spare a few minutes some time within the next few days in private so that I may gain this information."

"Any time you say," replied the Mir pleasantly. "I'm at your disposal. You mention the time and that will be it."

"You are indeed very kind to grant me this great favor and I appreciate it," I said.

So there and then we made an appointment for 5 o'clock the following day.

Every meal at the Mir's was a joy and a delight and both the Mir and the Rani were always present. I had already mentioned to him that this was a trouble and an imposition and too much to expect of him. But he said that it was the way he wanted it and that nothing was too good and no effort too great for his guests. Well, what can you do with a man like that?

Then he informed me concerning my friend's health. "The doctor has things under control now," he told me, "but he will remain here with me as my guest at the palace during your stay so there will be no worries

122 or cares in regard to Mr. Brunton's condition. The doc-
[758] tor will attend to his duties at Aliabad and look after the hospital there . . . but he only has one or two patients and he will be back and forth from the hospital to the palace. Therefore he will be in constant touch with your friend."

"No man could do more," I assured the Mir. "I don't know how we can ever thank you enough."

"Don't mention it," he said. "You have been very kind, too."

"Now is there anything that you would like me to get for you while you're here? I wish you would tell me because some things may take a few days to procure or prepare and I would like to have them ready for you."

[124] "I'll tell you what I would like and you tell me what you would like me to send you from Canada—and no holds barred." I said to him.

"Fair enough! We'll tell each other frankly what we want."

"Agreed," I joyfuly replied.

126 I always carry a notebook with me. It's a small folding affair made of leatherette or something, that has room for 3 or 4 ball point pens and a pad inside. I was making notes as well as marking down the things the Mir expressed interest in when I spoke of the conveniences available in America. I intended to send these to him anyway.

I had seen quite a few little items around Hunza that I would have liked to have . . . for instance, a Hunzan hat, a cane made in Hunza, a pair of Hunzan boots. The boots are most unusual, being something like the mukluks used in the north by the Eskimos, except that these are made in a simpler manner. They are somewhat like riding boots in shape except they are

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237

792 his ancestors' dynasty in India, he donated what is now
871 the Hunzan school system. The fact that the children of Hunza are given a good education, without any cost to them, is due entirely to the kindness and benevolence of that great man. He started and maintained the system and I trust that his son will continue in his father's footsteps."

That the school system of Hunza is working, I can attest.

792 From what I have been able to gather and learn, Hunza was one of the states of India that contributed to the coffers of the Aga Khan. There is some story, true or mythical, that each year all of his religious followers throughout the world gave him a gift of gold or platinum to the extent of his weight. Now I do know
[316] that some gold was mined in Hunza and probably that, too, was sent to the Aga Khan or added to the sum or weight sent from all of the countries and the millions of his followers to be his gift but, as far as I know, at the present time there is not much gold being mined in Hunza and nowhere did I see any sign of anything that could be used as a means of export to bring money into Hunza.

• 124 In the meantime I was enjoying my breakfast and between munching mouthfuls of food, I was asking the Mir some rather important questions.

651 "I read somewhere some time ago, that the revenues
681 you obtain from the fines you levy upon people in Hunza who commit misdemeanors or break rules or laws are added to the coffers of your own estate."

The Mir thought this was a great joke and laughed heartily.

"To begin with," he said, "laws are seldom broken by my people. They are good people and they live peaceably and do not commit serious offenses. During

249 plants. Of one thing I was sure and that was that they weren't growing them for the beauty of the flowers.

Now in my strolls and walks about Hunza, I didn't get very far above Altit. Who knows? Maybe a large quantity of poppies are grown further along the river. But actually I doubt it very much.

•124 Breakfast was now completed. I was eating alone, of course, in this instance. The Mir and Rani were just keeping me company. I thanked the Rani for her kindness, bowed to her and took my leave with the Mir.

Many long years ago I learned not to doubt people but to accept what they say until proven incorrect . . . be patient and allow time to speak. I accepted what the Mir told me but I wondered just how that miracle could take place. Upon examining the yak's feet or hooves or whatever else you might call them, I learned how this wonder of wonders occurred and I'm going to describe it to you. It will be difficult and you'll have to follow me rather closely. 231

If you examined a yak's forelegs, about 8 inches up from the hoof on the inside are appendages that look like spavins or callouses. These obviously are auxiliary paws, cushions or hooves. Therefore, the yak could, when necessary, walk on these appendages. It can be best illustrated by having you put your fingers straight up resting on the table. Then by dropping your fingers flat and putting down your wrist, you immediately shorten your arm by at least 6 inches. The yak could walk on its hooves or on the spavins 8 inches up along the leg.

Jahangir had never ridden a yak either, so he got aboard one and I shot him a few times—that is, with the camera. He was quite pleased with himself, too, because that was something he hadn't anticipated when he started the journey. 124

Sultan Ali, our guide, said to me after I dismounted, "These men made quite a sacrifice in bringing the yaks down here from Passu. It's about 38 miles, you know, and they lose at least 2 or 3 days from work on their farms."

I knew quite clearly what he meant and I said, "Well, what do you think would be fair recompense for their efforts?"

"Well, about 40 rupees each."

Jahangir was standing besides me while this discus-

124 [434] sion was taking place and he said to Sultan Ali, "That's ½ much too much! Why most people in Hunza don't get that much in a year. I don't think you should ask Mr. Tobe to give them that much money."

Sultan Ali and Jahangir exchanged a few fairly warm words about this and the end result was that Sultan Ali compromised by saying that maybe 20 rupees each would be satisfactory. So I dug into my pocket-book and handed each of them two 10 rupee notes.

½ [ie. 40 rupees - ANALYST]

partake of the Mir's blessings.

In comparing the fort at Altit and the one at Baltit, I gained the impression that the one at Altit had more rooms . . . smaller ones they were, but there seemed to be more of them. The old fort at Baltit was much larger and more impressive. Yet somehow I became more attached to the Altit Fort. I had the impression that it was almost impregnable.

Then I recalled the true story of the capture of the fort by the British and, after appraising its isolation, strength and precipitous banks and sides, I thought to myself, "Any group of men who had the courage to attempt to scale and capture any fort in Hunza deserved a lot more glory and loot than they would ever get in Hunza . . . and that is for certain!"

On one of the balconies stood a man with a bowl of apricots and Sultan Ali said, "This man is the chowkidor, or guardian, of the fort and it is customary to give him a gift."

"Of what?" I asked.

"Oh, about 10 rupees," replied Sultan Ali.

Jahangir almost jumped a foot when he heard that and he said, "For what? He hasn't done anything and we haven't eaten any of his apricots."

"Well," Sultan Ali said, "it's just customary!"

"Customary or no," said Jahangir, "I think it's ridiculous!"

I turned to Sultan Ali and said, "Normally I'd be glad to give him the tip that you suggest, but the truth of the matter is my fund of Pakistan rupees is just about nonexistent. When we set out for Hunza from Pindi we calculated in advance approximately how many rupees we would need and then we added on 100 extra, and that's what we came with.

"From the stories that we read and from the infor-

124 mation that we could gather, we were under the im-
122 pression that no money was used in Hunza. Therefore we didn't calculate on spending any. So far we have parted with approximately 300 rupees and to place the matter squarely in front of you, we don't have enough money to buy our plane tickets back from Gilgit to Rawalpindi! I'm hoping we'll be able to get some money at the bank in Gilgit because I did notice that there's a bank there, so I'm afraid I'll have to pass up the 10 rupees that I'm supposed to give the chowkidor of the fort. But tell him I enjoyed my visit to the fort very much anyway!"

344 While we were wandering around on the open bal-
644 cony of the old fort, Sultan Ali pointed to a neat looking place down below, but not far distant, and said, "That is the Mir's picnic place, where he comes every Saturday evening with his family. He stays there Sunday and Monday, returning to the palace for his various duties Monday evening. This practice is followed during the summer months."

"Well," I replied, "that's a custom that's followed pretty well in the West and probably in most places around the world . . . where one tries to get away from the usual home conditions and seeks refuge in a cottage. We, generally speaking, call this our summer cottage. And you know what? Many folks and families travel hundreds of miles just for the weekend, just as long as they can get away from home and the sameness of living for a few days at a time!"

"I guess we've seen everything here at the old fort worth seeing. So let's go down and make for the Mir's picnic place," I said as I headed for the stairs.

It was a walk of but a few hundred yards and we were soon at the garden gate of the bungalow. Sultan Ali spoke in Burushaski to one of the chowkidors who

115 Now I didn't see his birth certificate and I might as
165 well tell you, right here and now, that no vital statistics are kept in Hunza. I accept the figure of his age as he told me but remember, I was not there at the time of his birth!

344 When I was through with my spasm of inspection
644 and admiration, we began to parade up the long driveway that led into the Mir's garden. This area is flanked on the right by space that looks as though it were a parking lot, and maybe that's exactly what it is, but instead of cars, the guests or members of the family park—or should I say tether—their horses and yaks in this area. Maybe now they park their jeeps there.
[293] The Mir owns two of them, but one, I understand, was away in Pindi being repaired. (Or was it the shambles and horrible wreck of a jeep that I came across a week later, on the road back to Gilgit?)

126 Now I noticed that the Mir, Ayesh, the doctor and Cec were coming along the roadway to meet us, and soon we joined forces and were gathered in one group. I thought this was the ideal time to take some photographs and, luckily for us, they were the best photographs we took on the entire trip. Photography is something that has never interested me and I had never
[122] taken half a dozen pictures in my life. Before leaving home, I did try to learn a bit about photography, but I couldn't learn enough fast enough.

124 When the fun, excitement and fast-flowing humorous remarks had subsided, I said to the Mir, "If you've nothing more important to do or if you would care to give me a little more of your time, we could start that question and answer session that I arranged with you for this afternoon."

"I am at your service," he replied pleasantly and with alacrity.

So the Mir, the doctor and I proceeded up the stairs to his famed reception sun room. He instructed one of his people, in his own language and soon we were comfortably seated with an assortment of cold drinks before us. 124

The Mir, the doctor and I then had a long session. I asked questions of the doctor just as readily as I did of the Mir and both answered with equal frankness. At no time did one look at the other to ascertain whether or not he should answer the question. Everything was done on a strict, clear-cut, frank basis.

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128 As I sat and pondered my experiences—things that I had actually seen and witnessed, people whom I had met and talked to—I wondered and asked myself, "Will I be the man who will destroy the myth or will I corroborate it?"

Then I did a little soul searching. When an individual does that, it means he is troubled . . . and I admit that that was exactly my predicament.

I have tried to ascertain the truth of everything I have recorded and related in this book. Most of the time I was fortunate enough to see and do these things for myself. However, some information I had to obtain by asking questions and probing, but in every case I believed the information sincere and honest. You will note that, at all times, I sought my information from the highest and best informed sources available—even at the danger of annoying my host. Friendship and decorum are important conventions but, with me anyway, the quest for knowledge knows no bounds.

There may be errors and omissions and even falsehoods in my story but if there are any, it is by sheer accident or by willful misrepresentation on the part of someone else. Inasmuch as I am concerned, every statement made in this book is true, to the best of my innermost belief and knowledge.

●124 128 There were many instances, while gathering this information, where facts, stories and other data were related to me and I doubted their veracity. So right there and then I said so. In some instances, I told the people who were giving me information that what they said did not make sense, and either they must have misunderstood or there was something being lost or twisted in the translation. I recall at the moment three such specific instances with entirely different groups and in each case, upon studying and revamping the

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question, the error was cleared up. 128

Remember, I do not claim to be a Sherlock Holmes 124
or smart enough to detect by scent or otherwise an untruth or misunderstanding, so they may crop up in various places in the book.

Long before I left home I had prepared a set of queries. Among them were things for me to investigate —places, customs and chores for me to see and do. And from all this I was to make my own values and estimates as to the validity of the claims made about Hunza and its people. I tried to cover every aspect of importance and interest and I believe that, with very few exceptions, I faithfully accomplished my mission.

In preparation for the trip I read every book I could 122
find or locate that involved Hunza and in each case 114
the author had done a credible job, but most of them had failed miserably to give sufficient information—at least, for me—because 'twas information that I wanted. I wanted to know more about the agriculture of Hunza, about the health of the people, about their methods, their means and their way of life. None of the authors gave much of that vital data.

Right from the first moment that I made plans to go 12
to Hunza I decided that, if I wrote a book, it would 114
contain the most complete, the most detailed and the most thorough study of the people of Hunza yet accomplished by any writer. This determination came upon me from the frustrations I felt when I read the available books on Hunza and was left with a feeling that *only the surface of the subject had been scratched.*

In my endeavors to fulfill this undertaking, I have spared neither time, effort, risk nor expense. I certainly don't want my readers to be left with the feeling that all about Hunza has not been told. I definitely realize that no one in a short few weeks or even months could

of his fellow man and see that it is fairly and impartially carried out, we have made it too complicated. Is there any justifiable reason why it should take months or even years for a civil case to be heard in court? If there are not sufficient judges, I'm sure it would not be difficult to appoint or elect more of them. If there are not enough court rooms and court houses, I feel confident that, with American construction at its high peak of efficiency, it wouldn't take long to correct that.

Then why isn't it done? I don't know the answer. Do you? The Hunzan system of justice seems to be functioning in a most satisfactory manner. Anyone may petition the Mir and unless he is away, can get an almost immediate hearing. If the Mir is not available or if the problem is not a weighty one, then the Wazir can attend to it.

In truth, justice can be simple!

* * * * *

In order to get into Hunza you must obtain a permit from the Pakistani authorities in the capital, which is Karachi, but I understand the government is being moved from Karachi to Rawalpindi or a new site close to it. I still think it is more important to have the Mir's invitation, because even though you could get into Hunza, you would be practically helpless without the Mir's assistance and cooperation.

[124] Unless you brought a guide with you and one who could speak English and translate for you, you'd find the going very, very difficult in either Nagir or Hunza. Therefore I would suggest that if you contemplate a visit into this area, you obtain the Mir's invitation or permission first. Then go after the Pakistani government's permit.

Why the Pakistan government regards Hunza as a strategic region or area is not hard to understand if

361 [342] didn't just spring up overnight. By the appearance of the stone and mud houses, as well as all other features about the city, it was obvious that the city had been there for a long, long time.

Gilgit is indeed a strange city. It is one of these places that is right in the middle of nowhere, but to that mountain-harnessed area, Gilgit is a mighty important, strategic spot. Somehow I had the feeling that if there was a place called the "crossroads of the East" Gilgit had the sole right to the appellation, for through Gilgit would pass caravans from China, as well as travelers from Russia, Afghanistan, Persia, India, Pakistan and yes, undoubtedly from all other parts of the Eastern world.

ooo While I did see quite a bit of the city and the surrounding country, I regret today that I didn't dig a little deeper and get about even more. I think Gilgit has many interesting stories to tell . . . how could it be otherwise? And if I ever go back (and I intend to) I would like to be the one who brings these tales to light!

121 [164] The Gilgitis, from a health standpoint or from appearance in general, did not impress me one bit. The people were somewhat similar to what you would find or expect in Pakistan or India. However, the moment I crossed the bridge over the Gilgit River and got into the hills, I resolved to concentrate, coldly and with deliberate calculation, on every individual we met. So many confusing and contradicting statements had been made about the people of Hunza, that I was firmly resolved that if study and scrutinization and observation would do the trick, then I would find out the truth.

124 Akbar was keeping pace with Cecil most of the time, while Sherin was with me, and I questioned him closely about every person that we happened to meet or pass. I had no trouble—none whatsoever—in spotting a Hun-

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zan. And it wasn't because I was smart. There obviously was a distinct difference and anyone could pick out a Hunzan from a Nagirwal or any of the other citizens thereabout. 124

Much has been said about the walking habits of the people of Hunza . . . the long distances, the climbs, their endurance and their sprightly gait. I have had little experience with their endurance, but of their gait I can speak with some degree of authority. They have the lightest, easiest walk or pace that I have seen anywhere in my life. They seem to glide or spring effortlessly. If any people on the face of the earth have learned to walk without wasting any energy, I believe the people of Hunza have learned that secret. That's the only way I can account for our guides, for example, being in exactly the same condition when they finished their day's travel as when they started. I fully realize that they are accustomed to doing this. On occasions at home I have walked 12 miles at one march—and enjoyed it—but I was tired and mighty glad to take a good rest when I reached my goal. 481 [147]

I cannot recall one occasion where I saw a Hunzan resting after a walk. I practically retraced every foot of my journey back and forth and also the side excursions, but I couldn't find one occasion on which the Hunzan men had to rest. They not only seemed, but actually were, totally imperturbable, nonchalant and at ease wherever they went. Their stride was livelier and lighter than anything I have ever seen. [147]

Furthermore they never slouched, whether walking, standing or sitting. No matter where you saw them, they held their heads erect and chests out. [516]

Now this is not an afterthought because I began my search and observations the moment I left Gilgit. They didn't walk—they seemed to float! I wish I knew their

Nagir and Hunza would be somewhere around 50,000 people. That would allow the people of these two principalities 140 epileptics, to be on par with America. 164

When I mentioned this to the doctor, he pooh-poohed the idea and said, "I'm sure there wouldn't be a dozen epileptics on both sides of the river. In fact, with these three I think I have them all."

"What is the most prominent complaint that you find among the people?"

"Dysentery," he replied, without hesitation.

"Do you know the cause?" was my next question.

"I'm afraid I can't answer that question with any degree of authority or proof, but I can tell you this . . . that it is seldom very serious and the condition usually clears up in a few days. I know of no deaths caused by it."

Now the Mir returned and I was relieved, for I felt that I had offended the fine man by asking the doctor if there were any epileptics in Hunza, when he had told me there weren't any. 124

So I turned to the Mir and explained the situation to him, stating that in my eagerness to get the data I had asked the same question of the doctor and mentioned my fear of offending him.

He replied, "I believe friendship is made of sterner stuff than that."

I was surprised and delighted by this statement.

Then he explained that he was called by one of his servants who had signaled to him—concerning preparation for an event that was to take place that evening.

My next question to both the doctor and the Mir was, "Is there anything in the line of health or disease that is developing in Hunza different from the old pattern? Things that didn't occur before, that are beginning to appear now?" 164

125 One evening, I took a census of the
165 nine teen-age boys in my wood-carv-
[123] ing school. Of these, all from well-to-do households, how many had seen death in their immediate families?
165 Here was the roll:
551 Gohor Hayat: mother, three brothers, two sisters; Sherin Beg: one brother, one sister; Nur-ud-Din: mother, two brothers, two sisters; Md. Hamid: mother, one sister; Burhan Shah: one brother, one sister; Nasar Md.: mother, two brothers, one sister; Mullah Madut: two brothers; Suleiman: one brother; Ghulam Rasul: father. In a country fabled for the long lives of its inhabitants, these are depressingly typical Asian statistics.
165 Moreover, there is little reason to be-
576 lieve that any of the old men are really as old as is claimed.

"How old are you?" I once asked a venerable patient.

"Ninety, Hazoor!" he answered.

"How do you know you're ninety?"

"Well, Hazoor, my hair is white, and I know I'm very old, and ninety is very old, so I must be ninety."

•[124] My teen-aged assistant, Gohor Hayat, broke in impatiently, "Why do you
[217] waste time asking such questions?
[212] You know there are no records, because so few of my people can write!"

I had thought the old man might have a way of keeping count. "How old are you, Gohor Hayat?" I asked.

Gohor Hayat responded loftily, "I'm

[text continues on p. 43-C]